

THE FALL OF JERICHO

– *DECEMBER 7. – JOSHUA 6:8-11,14-20. –*

"All things are possible to him that believeth." – Mark 9:23.

JERICHO was a walled city situated about five miles from the Jordan. It was small, as cities are now estimated; but its wall was a necessity, owing to frequent incursions from Syria on the one side, and Egypt on the other; and because it was situated on one of the main lines of travel leading to a mountain pass. It is described as having been very rich, not only in precious metals, but also in expensive fabrics, clothing, etc.

The Lord's decree in respect to Jericho and all the other cities of Canaan was that they were devoted – *cherem*. The Israelites were not led into Canaan to do a pillaging work. They were to be the executioners of the Divine decree against the people of Canaan, who were divided up into little principalities, each city constituting the center of a principality. According to history, they were continually at war with each other, and atrociously corrupt, after the manner of the Sodomites. They were to be destroyed as no longer advantageous in the conditions in which they were living, either to themselves or others. God took them away as He saw good.

In the great prison-house of Sheol, the tomb, they would wait for the more favorable time of Messiah's Kingdom and the release and assistance out of degradation and death promised to all mankind through Abraham's seed: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The Israelites, as executioners of the Divine decrees, were to destroy the cities of Canaan and all their inhabitants, their animals and all their property. The exceptions were the things of metal; and

these were not to be appropriated by the Israelites to their own use, but were consecrated in advance to the Lord for the furnishment and adornment of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

"CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST"

After crossing Jordan, the Israelites encamped about midway between the river and Jericho, the latter city having shut up its gates tightly, expecting to endure a long siege. Joshua was aware that the first place of attack was Jericho, but evidently was not aware of the character of the siege and of the way in which it would be overthrown. While reconnoitering in the vicinity of Jericho, he came upon an armed soldier, and at once inquired whether he was a friend or a foe to Israel. The answer was that he was the Captain of the Lord's host. One of the angels had been commissioned to materialize – to appear as a human being and to wear human garments and armor – for the purpose of communicating the Divine plans to Joshua.

We are to remember that the Bible relates frequent manifestations of this kind – spirit beings hiding their personality while assuming human bodies, human clothing, etc., in which they ate, talked, etc., as men. We remember that it was after this same manner that the Lord Jesus after His resurrection appeared to His disciples in various forms, sometimes similar to His crucified body, but more often otherwise – as the gardener, a way-farer, etc. Similarly, three spirit beings appeared to Abraham on one occasion – not only in human bodies, but wearing human apparel. And they ate and talked with Abraham (Genesis 18:8,9), and he knew not that they were angels until subsequently they revealed their identity.

Through this Heavenly messenger the Divine plan for the capture of Jericho was revealed to Joshua. He immediately put it into execution. Every day there was a solemn procession around the doomed city. First went a military escort from the various

tribes. Next followed a company of priests blowing rams' horns, making shrill noises. Then came a further procession – a rear guard – presumably warriors. In harmony with explicit directions not a voice was raised, not a threat nor a shout. Everything connected with the matter was most solemn and funeral, except the blowing on the rams' horns, which were the same as were used in announcing each new year, but especially and peculiarly used in the Jubilee year.

These solemn funeral processions encompassed Jericho once every day for six days. Then on the seventh day they went about the city seven times, the last time vociferously shouting – the seven priests blowing upon the rams' horns. When they had made the seventh circle of the city they stopped in front of it, still blowing; and forthwith the wall of the city crumbled and fell. The translation of our Common Version, "down flat," seems too strong a statement to represent properly the original. The walls of the city crumbled and fell immediately in front of the Ark. But not all the wall fell; for the account tells that the portion of the wall where Rahab's house was built did not fall. (*Cf. Joshua 2:15-19.*) The wall fell to such a degree that Israel's soldiers were able easily and quickly to surmount it and accomplish the work of destruction which the Lord had commanded.

Is it suggested that such an event would be preposterous? If so, we reply that everything in the Divine purpose can easily enough be accomplished under the Divine supervision. Quite probably the tremor of an earthquake, under Divine direction, caused the fall of Jericho's wall in front of the Israelites. When we consider all the circumstances as related in the Bible, it does not seem at all impossible that God thus intervened for the carrying out of His own purposes.

Prof. Wright declares, "The 'mediate' cause of the fall of the wall was some subterranean earthquake, which shook down the

walls of the part of the city where the men were standing, or undermined them so that they sank. This is easily possible in that region of earthquakes." Prof. Lawson describes similar results from earthquakes near San Francisco, saying, "The earth waves which passed through the highly elastic rocks swiftly with a small amplitude seem in this material to have been transformed into slow undulations of great amplitude, which were excessively destructive."

Prof. Wright adds, "All the chimneys of the place [Oakland] were thrown down, and the bricks were scattered [R5344 : page 332] around over the yard as grains of wheat would be when falling from the hands of the sower. The record is that at the appointed time the walls [of Jericho] fell; and we are free to believe that the catastrophe was connected with an earthquake, which was made to synchronize with the final blasts of the rams' horns. In the light of history and geological conditions of this region, the story bears every mark of being a genuine and authentic account of an event so remarkable that it could not have been modified by tradition without rendering it fantastic and incredible. To the geologist who believes in God, it is perfectly reasonable. To the textual critic, the freedom from fantastic comment marks it as having been unadorned by tradition."

There seems to be a typical significance connected with the capture of Jericho. In a sense it is made to represent all the cities of Canaan as their capital. The six days of the quiet marching around the city, with nothing accomplished except the witnessing, represents the six great Days of the larger Week – each Day a thousand years long. During the world's history, Sin has been entrenched and impregnable. The Lord's people have merely given witness against it – blowing the trumpets – giving forth the Bible Message that ultimately Sin shall be destroyed – "All the wicked will God destroy." They shall perish "like natural brute beasts." "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction" – "the

Second Death." – Psalm 145:20; 2 Peter 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:14.

But little has resulted from all the witnessing. We are waiting for the great Seventh Day – the thousand years of Messiah's Reign. In it the citadel of evil will be surrounded seven times, or completely. The shout of victory will go up; and the strong walls of sin and error, of Satan's falsehood, of human deception, will fall. Satan shall be bound a thousand years, to deceive the world no more, and every evil thing and principle and all who love sin will be forever destroyed in the Second Death. Thus will be ushered in the glorious epoch for which we so long have waited and prayed, in which there shall be no more curse, no more sighing, crying or dying.

That victory will be under the guidance and direction of Immanuel, the Captain of the Lord's host, the Captain of our salvation. Christ and the Church will then be beyond the veil in the glory of the Kingdom on the spirit plane; but there will be representatives of the Kingdom on the earthly plane, though their rule and direction will be under the guidance and instruction of the spiritual ones – of the glorified. The Scriptures are very clear in their indication that none will belong to the Heavenly company in the resurrection except such as have been begotten of the Holy Spirit during this Gospel Age – beginning with Pentecost.

The glorious characters who preceded Jesus and the Church, like John the Baptist, may be friends of the Bridegroom and friends of the Bride class, but themselves belong to another class. Since no one was begotten of the Holy Spirit before the Sacrifice of Calvary, none could possibly be born of the Spirit previously. St. Paul declares that glorious blessings are coming for all those noble characters of the past, such as Moses and others whom he enumerates in Hebrews 11. He concludes the story of their life and blessing by assuring the Church that these Ancient Worthies apart

from us (the Church) shall not be made perfect. God has provided some better thing for us (the Church). Our better portion is the attainment of the spirit nature, like unto the angels, but far above angels, sharers with our Redeemer in His glory and immortality.

The reward of the Ancient Worthies, however, will be glorious. Brought back from the tomb perfect as human beings, they will be grand ensamples to the world of what Restitution will mean to all who will come into harmony with Messiah's Kingdom. And their portion and honor will be to represent that Kingdom as Princes or Rulers in all the earth. – Psalm 45:16.

How munificent are the Divine arrangements! Our great Creator is the Fountain of blessings, pouring out His mercies and favors on every hand. Our Lord Jesus, the great Captain of our salvation, who manifested His loyalty to the Father even unto the death of the cross, has already attained the highest position, next to Jehovah. The faithful Church, walking in the footsteps of the Redeemer in the narrow way of self-sacrifice, will be next to Him in His glory and Kingdom. Then, on every man in his own order, the Divine blessings will shower for a thousand years, to the uplifting of all out of sin and degradation back to the perfection of Adam in his Edenic home. The result will be "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will amongst men"; for all contrary-minded shall be destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death. – Acts 3:23.

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